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ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

a MODEL *for* CONSULTATION *on* EDUCATION FINANCE

As approved by the OPSBA Board of Directors
December 15, 1990

THE ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION

The ONTARIO PUBLIC SCHOOL BOARDS' ASSOCIATION represents 94 public boards of education of all sizes and from all regions of the province which serve over 1,700,000 students and adult learners. OPSBA speaks for public education in Ontario and represents the interests of public school trustees to the government, the public and the media.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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A Model For Consultation on Education Finance

Table of Contents

I. PREFACE 2

II. OUR CURRENT ENVIRONMENT 2
- The Provincial Government's Commitment to Consultation 2
- The Need for a Review 2

III. PRINCIPLES OF A GOOD CONSULTATION PROCESS 3
1. A Collaborative Definition for Consultation 3
2. Recognition of the Governmental Partnership in the Delivery of Education in Our Communities 4
3. Consensus with Input from the Stakeholders in Education 4
4. Balanced Representation 4
5. Broadly Based Terms of Reference: Governance and Finance 4
6. Adequate Resources 5
7. Commitment: Political and Education Community 5

IV. OPSBA'S PREFERRED MODEL FOR CONSULTATION ON EDUCATION FINANCE 5
- The Scope of the Review 6
- Possible Structure 6
- Possible Process 6
- Consultation 7

V. THE FAIR TAX COMMISSION 7

Appendix A

SOME CONSULTATION PROCESSES, PAST AND PRESENT 8
- The Ontario School Trustees' Council 8
- A Joint Committee of Ministry of Education/Treasury and Economics, and School Trustee Associations 8
- The Select Committee of the Legislature on Education 8
- Report of the Commission on the Financing of Elementary and Secondary Education in Ontario 9
- Ministry of Education Consultation Process on "Restructuring" Education (Throne Speech Initiatives) 9
- Other Ministry of Education and Liaison Consultative Processes 10
- Premier's Councils 11
- The Social Assistance Review Committee 11
- The Provincial-Municipal Social Services Review Committee 12

A Model For Consultation on Education Finance

I. PREFACE

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association recently submitted a report to the government entitled "The Sixty Percent Solution: Increased Provincial Funding for Education". In this report OPSBA urged the government to use this opportunity to establish a new consultative relationship with local school boards in the delivery of education to our citizens. OPSBA urged the establishment of a broad consultation forum which would develop and implement a revised system of education finance.

This report continues the work of OPSBA by examining the options for structuring such a forum, and by suggesting "principles of consultation" which could be the basis of a future examination of education finance. The conclusions have been developed by reviewing a variety of consultation processes in the education sector and in other public policy areas, assessing the strengths and weaknesses of these processes and the results achieved. Past history and experiences with other consultation processes can be invaluable in planning for the future.

As well, OPSBA on behalf of public school boards in Ontario has provided its views on the goals and objectives to be achieved by a consultation process on education finance.

II. OUR CURRENT ENVIRONMENT

The Provincial Government's Commitment to Consultation:

The Ontario Public School Boards' Association is operating on the premise that this provincial government is committed to consultation and cooperation with boards of education, educators and teachers - the major participants in education. Therefore we will not elaborate further on the value of an "education partnership".

It is recognized that the provincial government is responsible for education policy and legislation. However, policy development and the implementation of policy by local school boards are interrelated. If locally elected boards are to have some accountability to their citizens regarding the delivery of education to reflect not only provincial standards and directives but also local conditions, then school boards must also be involved in the development of the long range plans and policy directions for our education system. Consultation is therefore necessary in the development of any changes to the education finance system.

The Need for a Review:

There are a number of reasons why a consultation process is both necessary and timely. There have been several processes in the past few years: the Select Committee of the

Legislature on Education (1989-90), the Commission on the Financing of Elementary and Secondary Education in Ontario (MacDonald Commission, 1985), and the Commission on Private Schools in Ontario, to name only a few. Some of the recommendations of these studies have been enacted, but comprehensive change has not happened.

The government has already put into motion substantial policy changes to the education system, as announced in two past Throne speeches. There have been significant changes to what our education system is to provide to our communities, but the complementary change, how the system is funded, has not occurred.

OPSBA believes that finance and governance are directly related to the kind of education that is provided in our communities. In reviewing finance, one also is examining the role of school trustees and their relationship to the community in providing education.

The delivery of education cannot be viewed in isolation. Society is rapidly changing and public expectations about our elementary and secondary education systems are also changing.

Ontario is a diverse and multicultural province, with urban centres and also many smaller and rural communities. As there is an inequitable resource base for financing education, there is unequal access to a "standard" level of education service across the province. There is a need to examine education finance in a fundamental and comprehensive manner, to address the question of how a highly regulated and standardized service which is based on the principle of equity can be funded from the current inequitable resource base.

III. PRINCIPLES OF A GOOD CONSULTATION PROCESS

Appendix A "Some Consultation Processes, Past and Present" provides a very brief summary of some of the activities over the past few years. It is useful to keep these in mind; what they achieved and did not achieve and why, when developing a "model" for consultation on education finance.

OPSBA has given this some thought and presents the following as possible guidelines for a model "joint" effort on education finance.

1. A Collaborative Definition for Consultation

There are many views of what is meant by "consultation" on public policy. These are some of the variations:

- information sharing and communicating policy change after decision-making
- advising the affected parties after the policy decision has been made, but involving the interests in a process of consultation on implementation
- advising the parties before decision-making and considering the views of the major

participants in the policy decision-making process
- examining issues jointly and developing solutions and recommendation, which then can be considered by decision-makers (Cabinet)

2. Recognition of the Governmental Partnership in the Delivery of Education in Our Communities

The structure and terms of reference for a process for the review of education finance, whether it be a comprehensive review or an examination of the recognized expenditure ceilings, must take into account the governmental partnership in the delivery of education in our communities. Education is the responsibility of two levels of government, the provincial level and the local level. Therefore the composition of the process should reflect this political accountability for education.

3. Consensus with Input from the Stakeholders in Education

A joint provincial/school boards' committee or process for education finance should focus on innovation, problem solving and consensus amongst the committee members and the participants. This means that a provincial/local government process should involve all of the stakeholders to build consensus on the long term plan for education finance. This would include all the variations of public, separate and french language boards of education, plus the added input of teachers, students, parents, and the community.

4. Balanced Representation

The diversity of our school system must be reflected in the composition of any future consultation committee. Therefore there must be the appropriate balance of representation from large, small, urban, and rural school boards. As well the committee should be composed of the appropriate balance of public, separate, and french language school boards, with public board representation a significant component, due to their size and mandate.

5. Broadly Based Terms of Reference: Governance and Finance

The Ministry of Education presently has in process a program review of our education system. The Ministry of Education "Action Plan, 1989-94: Restructuring the Education System" is a consultative process for implementing the Throne speech initiatives, and is divided into six components each with their own tailor-made consultation procedures: the Early Years, the Formative Years, the Transition Years, the Specialization Years, Technological Education and Teacher Education.

OPSBA, when promoting a review of education finance, is not asking for a program review of our education system, but a review of finance. This is in essence a review of the respective roles of each level of government, provincial and school board, in delivering education and in funding. Once the political accountability and responsibility is clarified and reaffirmed, the funding responsibilities follow.

6. Adequate Resources

The level of commitment on the part of both parties to a joint process is reflected in the financial, human, and political support that is brought to the table. The review of education finance must have a commitment in resources from all parties. OPSBA would assist by providing trustee representation, OPSBA staff assistance to the public school trustees in the process, and technical advice from the staff of public school boards across the province.

Due to the scope and complexity of the issue, the dedication of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Treasury and Economics, and all other related ministries is needed to ensure access to adequate financial data and research.

7. Commitment: Political and Education Community

It was stated earlier in this report that there have been many reviews of education finance in the past with only partial results. OPSBA believes that one factor for the lack of comprehensive reform is political will.

The education community is not entirely blameless. Because of the divergent and emotional viewpoints on the issue of education finance within the education community itself: public school trustees, separate school trustees, french language trustees, school board administrators, teachers, teacher unions, students and of course ratepayers, provincial governments have been placed in a potential "no win" situation. Therefore there has not been the political will at the Cabinet level to undertake this project.

OPSBA suggests that a consultation process on education finance should be a cooperative effort which will bring the education community together to perhaps not always agree, but to gain a better understanding of the issues and each others roles.

The Premier, the Minister of Education, the Treasurer of Ontario and other affected ministers must be committed to such a process, to ensure that all viewpoints, majority and minority, are considered by Cabinet. It is well recognized that the Premier and Cabinet will be making the decisions and are ultimately accountable for any future changes to our education finance system.

IV. OPSBA'S PREFERRED MODEL FOR CONSULTATION ON EDUCATION FINANCE

When determining the best approach, OPSBA has kept in mind the scope of the issue. Education finance as stated earlier is not an isolated fiscal policy. It affects many ministries of the provincial government: the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Treasury and Economics, the Ministry of Revenue, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the Ministry of Community and Social Services, to name a few. It affects not only the education community, but the community at large. Ultimately it affects the taxpayer, both provincial and local . All have a stake in potential changes to the system.

Appendix A "Some Consultation Processes Past and Present" contains a brief overview of the options considered. The following is the OPSBA proposal:

An Intergovernmental/Multi Ministry Process on Education Finance.

OPSBA recommends that any future consultation process on education finance be a joint process of the two levels of government, the provincial government and the school boards (public, separate and french language). They would involve the education community.

OPSBA prefers a joint government to government process since the provincial government and local government are the partners in the delivery of education in our communities. The broader education community would contribute through their expertise on sub-committees, and through a public consultation process.

The Scope of the Review:

- the clarification of the roles of the governmental partners in the delivery of education
- examination of the balance between local decision-making and adherence to province-wide standards and regulations for our education system
- a clear relationship between funding from the property tax base and local authority
- development of common objectives for the education system
- development of a financing system to support the common objectives

Possible Structure:

- A committee of the two levels of government comprising:
  - representatives from public, separate and french language school boards
  - the representatives from local government would be from the school trustee associations with the public school board association (OPSBA) having significant representation due to its size and mandate
  - representatives from the relevant ministries (either the Parliamentary Assistant or senior staff at the Deputy Minister or Assistant Deputy Ministry level)
  - ministries represented around the table should be:
    - Education
    - Treasury and Economics
    - Cabinet Office
    - Municipal Affairs
    - Community and Social Services
    - Health

  with others brought into the discussions as needed.

Possible Process:

- the committee would develop its terms of reference, jointly

- the committee would develop its research plan, policy analysis, consultation process, jointly

Some ideas on process are:

- breakdown of the task into components, for example:
  - common objectives for our education system
  - principles of education finance
  - property tax burden
  - grant programs design: GLG ceilings, capital, etc.
  - coordination of education with other community services

Consultation

- establish consultation sub-groups, involving the stakeholders in the education community, i.e. teachers' federations, school board administrators, parent/teacher associations, other community organizations, etc.
- develop a consultation document
- conduct a public consultation process
- individual school boards would be encouraged to participate directly in the consultation process with the committee, and make direct representation to the committee, while also forwarding copies of their positions to their parent associations
- review input from the consultation process and prepare a final report to government
- final report: to Cabinet
- implementation committees

V. THE FAIR TAX COMMISSION

OPSBA regards with some interest the Throne speech reference to a "Fair Tax Commission". It seems logical that as the government is undertaking a fundamental review of our tax system, which would include the function and fairness of the property tax, that education finance be a component of this process. The question that must be resolved is the role of property tax in funding education. The OPSBA proposed model for consultation on an education finance framework would create a process for the thorough examination of the issues, and would be complementary to the work of the Fair Tax Commission.

APPENDIX A

SOME CONSULTATION PROCESSES, PAST AND PRESENT

THE ONTARIO SCHOOL TRUSTEES' COUNCIL

OSTC was formed in late 1949 and incorporated in 1953 as an umbrella organization to represent the common interests of a number of trustee organizations which existed in the province at the time. In its early years, and up to the passage of Bill 100 in 1975, OSTC was actively involved in teacher-school board negotiations.

Council's role has changed gradually over the years to one in which it seeks to promote education interests and work cooperatively on matters of common interest to its member associations. It is primarily a mechanism for uniting the trustee organizations for the purpose of consultation with the government. With the enactment of Bill 30, the growth of French language governance in Ontario education and the amalgamation of three public school trustee organizations in 1989, the current participants in OSTC: OPSBA, OSSTA, and AFCSO, are less able to mutually agree on many issues. As a result the coordinating and consultation function of OSTC has been severely limited.

A JOINT COMMITTEE OF MINISTRY OF EDUCATION/TREASURY AND ECONOMICS, AND SCHOOL TRUSTEE ASSOCIATIONS

Another option is a joint committee of school trustees and the Ministry of Education and Ministry of Treasury and Economics.

Pro:

- joint involvement of the Ministry of Education with the Ministry of Treasury and Economics would provide increased political commitment (2 Ministers)
- both Treasury and the Ministry of Education would provide resources

Con:

- would exclude the other stakeholders, teachers, school board administrators, students, and the community
- would not been seen as a visible or responsive consultation process
- would not facilitate coordination with other ministries

THE SELECT COMMITTEE OF THE LEGISLATURE ON EDUCATION

The Select Committee on Education was established in February 1988 with the mandate to examine the formal elementary and secondary systems in Ontario. The Committee comprised MPPs from all parties, prepared reports and submitted its findings to the Legislature. Over the course of two years the Select Committee produced four reports on:

the goals of education, the framework of our schools and school operations, education finance and early childhood education in our schools. The Committee conducted hearings as its method of seeking input from the public and the education community.
The process was an advisory one to the Legislature, to Cabinet and the Minister of Education, that is its recommendations were suggestions which would have to be persued by the appropriate ministries. The process was a good one for an examination of the issues, identification of concerns and for providing opportunities for public input. However, results could not be achieved unless the decision-makers (the Premier and Cabinet) viewed the recommendations of the reports of the Select Committee as a government priority.

Report of the Commission on the Financing of Elementary and Secondary Education in Ontario

The MacDonald Commission was established in 1984 and reported in 1985. The commission was a group of six experts in public policy from government, the private sector and school boards. The commission conducted hearings across the province, reviewed submissions from the public and was generally viewed as a high profile review of education finance. Some of the recommendations of the report such as those relating to school board structures and French language governance, amalgamating specific school boards, the sharing of corporate assessment between public and separate school boards, regional pooling of commercial and industrial assessment have been enacted by the provincial government. However many of the recommendations regarding assessment and the options regarding the revenue base of education have not been pursued by past provincial governments.

Another commission could be considered.

Pro:
- a commission would provide an obvious mechanism for public input - i.e. hearings.
- leading "thinkers" as members of the commission may find some innovative solutions

Con:
- there was a commission in 1985 (MacDonald), but many of the recommendations are still tabled
- there was not the political will of the education community or the Cabinet to proceed on many issues as all did not "buy" into the process
- another high profile commission would be expensive and criticized by taxpayers

Ministry of Education Consultation Process on "Restructuring" Education (Throne Speech Initiatives)

The 1987 and 1989 Throne speeches contained major announcements for the improvement of our elementary and secondary education system. However, the government did not consult with the education sector prior to decision-making. After the policy decisions regarding the new directions for the education system were made, the Ministry of Education developed in late 1989 a consultation program on the implementation of Throne speech

initiatives, "Action Plan 1989-1994: Restructuring the Education System, a Framework for Consultation".

The Ministry of Education has established six resource teams each with a "reaction group": Teacher Education, Early Years, Formative Years, Transition Years, Specialization Years, and Technological Education Years. The groups each will develop a consultation document and seek input. The consultation process and implementation plan is managed by a Steering Management Committee and a Learning Programs Advisory Council which reports to the Deputy Minister.

The process as noted above is not a policy review but a formalized program implementation plan.

Other Ministry of Education Liaison and Consultative Processes

The Ministry has a variety of consultation groups, which provide a forum for input on specific issues, for example, the Learning Programs Advisory Council as noted in the above consultation process on the Throne speech initiatives. Other committees are: the Ministry of Education Ad Hoc Committee on Copyright Issues, and the Minister's Council on Education Technology. This type of ad hoc advisory group is a useful mechanism for establishing communication with a special target group for review of issues specifically within the mandate of the Ministry of Education.

An advisory group to the Minister of Education would be an obvious option.

Pro:

- The Ministry of Education is familiar with other processes, primarily in the program and curriculum areas
- the Ministry has the resources and the capacity to develop the necessary databases
- the Ministry of Education has traditional ties to the stakeholders in education

Con:

- with the Ministry of Education as the only ministry involved, the review would have a narrower focus
- the process could not be coordinated with other initiatives impacting education and public finance in other ministries
- there would not be a broadly based Cabinet commitment to the process

The Ministry of Education has a School Finance Liaison Committee. This is an informal group which meets at the call of the School Business and Finance Branch staff to share ideas on education finance issues as they arise. The committee is strictly a staff group, ministry and school boards. The group may, for example, review proposals for changing the GLG structure on a confidential basis with board of education staff providing advice and impact analysis.

Premier's Councils

The Premier's Council (on Technology and the Global Economy) the Premier's Council on Health Strategy and the Ontario Round Table on the Environment were formed under the leadership of the past Premier in 1986 and 1988. They are all multipartite advisory bodies chaired by the Premier of the province, and each council is composed of Cabinet ministers and leaders with specific expertise from the community.

Each Council has produced reports with broad policy directions for the future. Each are staffed by a secretariat and by outside consultants separate from the provincial bureaucracy. Each have consulted but not with their traditional constituency.

The Premier's Council published "Competing in the Global Economy" (1988) and "People Skills in the New Global Economy" (1990). The Premier's Council on Health Strategies has produced several "goals" documents. This Council is an advisory body which provides direct advice to the Premier on strategic objectives and goals for health. If adopted various ministries and levels of government would incorporate these overall objectives into their operational plans. The Ontario Round Table on the Environment and the Economy has a similar function. Its consultation document "The Challenge Paper" recommends broad strategic directions for government (provincial and local) action.

Establishing another Premier's Council for a review of education is a consideration.

Pro:

- the concept would encourage innovation in developing long term strategies
- the present Premier's Councils have multi-stakeholder representation for building consensus
- they are outside of the jurisdiction of the line ministries, but are assisted by them, i.e. background information and research

Con:

- they are advisory only to the Premier
- they have had a varied impact on public policy to date
- they are perceived as being exclusive clubs by many, as they consult only with a limited list of "experts"
- they are not conducive to wide public input and consultation

The Social Assistance Review Committee

In July 1986 the Ontario government established the Social Assistance Review Committee, an independent committee for the review of the social assistance system. The committee included 12 members with varied backgrounds and experience from across the province. There was an extensive public hearing process in 14 communities across Ontario. The committee reviewed submissions, established seven sub-groups of experts for research and analysis, and prepared a number of background and research documents. SARC produced

its findings in 1988, "Transitions", which had 274 specific recommendations and called for a total restructuring of the social assistance system in Ontario.

The Provincial-Municipal Social Services Review Committee

The Provincial-Municipal Social Services Review Committee was initiated in 1987. The Committee was a provincial-municipal one of 12 representatives, four from the Ministry of Community and Social Services, four from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and three from the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (the municipal social service staff organization). The terms of reference were unique in that the Committee was not to review social services programs, but the respective roles of the provincial and municipal levels of government in delivering and funding these programs. The review was one based on the premise that a "restructuring" of the management authority and financing was needed. Therefore there are parallels to a review of education finance.

The Minister and the Ministry of Community and Social Services senior staff illustrated a high degree of commitment to the process. The ministry participants were Assistant Deputy Ministers. There was frequent reporting back to the Minister and to an inter-ministerial support group.

The Committee established sub-groups with involvement from a variety of experts and interests. The Committee sought input from the many stakeholders, community agencies, and groups, by establishing a Voluntary-Sector Reference Group. The Committee produced a consultation document and conducted an extensive hearing process, holding 13 public meetings across the province.

The Committee spent approximately nine months producing its final report "Report of the Provincial-Municipal Social Services Review Committee" which recommends new governmental roles in delivering social services in our communities. It recommends a totally new financial system for these services based on the principles of clarification of governmental roles and responsibilities.